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AUTHOR Robinson, Shawn
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ABSTRACT

Multicultural education relates to the infusion of all cultures into the current standard curriculum. Culture consists of ways of thinking, values, reactions to problems and situations, and many other things. Deep culture refers to the features that are not visible. The deep culture of a group explores intrinsic and subtle features. This paper provides a discussion on national research, studies, and opinions on the teaching of multicultural courses. It states that the teaching of diversity should be contextual as themes should be addressed from multiple perspectives to gain a fullness of the concept. In order to achieve success at implementing diversity within the curriculum, each community college must analyze demographics, describe influences and challenges and evaluate its commitment to access, quality, and diversity. For a multicultural climate to exist, faculty and administration must participate proactively in the academic life of the community college. Also, students must be given a voice in the assessment process. The paper discusses the challenges of multiculturalism for college instruction, such as devising and implementing cultural activities that give appropriate acknowledgement of all people and places that are significant to the content at hand, and for instructors to be sensitive to different learning styles in their classroom. Contains 11 references. (VWC)

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Shawn Robinson
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ISSUES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Independent Research
Effects of Multiculturalism on the Community College Curriculum

July, 1996

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INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION

When the words "Multicultural Education" are used, many things come to mind. For the author, multicultural education relates to the infusion of all cultures into the current standard curriculum. Multicultural education is designed to show the importance of all cultures in the curriculum and course content. The word "culture" is often incorrectly confused with "race." According to Carrier, multiculturalism is an "approach that confers validity, by means of education, upon the multiple cultural perspectives which make up the American Experience."

There are many types of cultures. Some are macro-cultures. Some are micro-cultures. Each has a unique set of identifiable features and characteristics that all within that culture share. Cultures can be racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender-based, education-based, geographic, linguistic, or take a host of other forms. At Valencia, students, faculty, and staff have noticed that each campus has its own culture. Culture consists of ways of thinking, values, reactions to problems and situations, and many other things. It is easy to "see" racial and ethnic differences and to group people together into racial and ethnic cultures. It is not so easy to do so when you must go into the psyche of a person.

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This deep culture refers to the features that are not visible. The deep culture of a group explores intrinsic and subtle features. The answers to questions like, "What makes a graduate of Valencia

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Community College different from a graduate of Seminole Community College?" come when we look at the intrinsic experiences provided at the different colleges. The macro-culture of being a college graduate may not explain the micro-culture that exists at either college. Things are not done the same at Seminole as they are at Valencia. The reasons can be found by examining the deep culture.

From this, one should arrive at the notion of a person belonging to many cultures during a lifetime. Most people belong to several cultures at any point in time. I, myself, belong to cultures that are racial, ethnic, nationalistic, geographic, linguistic, and socioeconomic, to name a few. The various forms of media have helped the nation define culture as ethnicity, race, or national origin. The reason is because these are macro-cultures that easily categorize people without having to take time learning about the individuals in that group. Once a person is thrown into a macro-culture, the rest of the world can now make assumptions about this person.

When culture is seen as more than ethnicity and race, we as a society can move onto multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is the acceptance of, the acknowledgment of, and respect for other cultures as significant valuable entities in our society. Other cultures must not be viewed as inferior to one's own culture, but equally as valid. One does not have to agree with the practices of a particular culture to respect and understand that culture. Acknowledging the existence of other cultures does not invalidate or diminish the importance of one's own culture or a dominate culture. Multiculturalism scares those that don't know all the facts. Multiculturalism should show that many cultures worked and work together with common goals and values to progress society. When there are many micro-cultures coexisting within a macro-culture, confusion can arise. We

should seek to broaden our understanding of other cultures without fear of trying to be converted or feel as though our culture is somehow not important anymore.

NATIONAL RESEARCH, STUDIES, AND OPINIONS

One study at Brevard Community College, students were given the opportunity to decide for themselves what topics should be included in a multicultural curriculum. The survey used was distributed to a random sample of students. The survey questions were set up to rate the interest level of students on finding out about distortions, omissions, and little known facts in American History. The results, as found in Carrier's article, showed that most students tended to be at least "somewhat" interested in having more diversity in the curriculum.

Kappner cites several colleges and universities that go so far as to require courses on ethnicity, race, gender, and diversity in general on the part of all students. These classes are intended to show how the contributions of diversity people formed the world of today. Also, these courses have the effect of breaking down barriers between groups and broadening minds, through the analysis of "prejudice and discrimination through various disciplines." Scott suggests that the teaching of diversity should be contextual. Themes should be addressed from multiple perspectives to gain a fullness of the concept. No matter diversity is taught and addressed, the students must be convinced to its value.

Even if interest is determined on the part of the students, the faculty and staff must be willing to put the experiences in place for the students. One aspect of the implementation of diversity is the recruitment and retention of a diversity faculty and student body. In 1992, Kansas City Kansas

Community College reported having a minority student population approximately that of the surrounding community population of 35%, but only 5% of faculty were minorities. Being that this institution wanted to continue promoting "itself as an equal opportunity educational institution" (Wilson), it sought out ways to recruit minority faculty to get the percents to more closely match the student population. The college found that in order to get qualified minority faculty, it needed to advertise in minority oriented publications, encourage minorities in graduate schools to seek careers at the college, and develop mentoring programs what help get potential faculty in a track that would lead them the college. One last suggestion came about to make every effort possible to retain minority faculty even in fiscally troublesome times.

In order to achieve success at implementing diversity within the curriculum, Pauline Kayes, as cited by Harris (1995), writes that each community college must "analyze the community demographics, describe influences that compel the college to meet multicultural and international challenges, evaluate the college's commitment to access, quality, and diversity, and be aware of the changing student population.

Kee writes that for a multicultural climate to exist, faculty and administration must participate proactively in the academic life of the community college. This can be done through peer-coaching, in-service workshops, and enhancing faculty recruitment techniques to emphasize the value of diversity in education. The administration should make every effort to make sure that all students have the opportunity to find something about the college that makes them feel welcome. Training, such as that given at George Brown College, should given to all college personnel to increase awareness and understanding to multicultural issues (Kee).

Programs, like Miami Promise at Miami-Dade Community College and Fortune 2000 at the University of Delaware, should help transition students from high school through the community college onto the four-year university in a very intentional, friendly, and intrusive manner. These programs should involve the student, the parents or guardians, faculty, counselors, and professionals from beginning to end with the sole purpose of have the students succeed and feel a connection to the educational system (Kee).

For multiculturalism to work, the students must be given a voice in the assessment process (Harris, 1995). The instructor evaluation should contain questions that request feedback on whether or not a variety of perspectives were accepted and included in the course, whether all students were encouraged to participate, and if understanding and respect was shown to all students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, etc. The technique allows for a type of quality control on the experiences in the classroom that could boost the positive benefits of a diverse curriculum.

When looking at success of students, Harris (1989) suggests that achievement problems are based on preparation, not race. This means that colleges must assist secondary schools in educating students through outreach programs and college-prep/ dual enrollment courses. Financial support from the community and the college administration must be funneled to programs that increase basic skills and hasten acclimation to college life.

RESEARCH AT VALENCIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

At Valencia Community College, multiculturalism and diversity within the curriculum is found in many places. Very few of these place include formal research. The research that has been done was part of a Title III grant that the college received three years ago. The grant sought to find ways to assist culturally diverse students achieve at acceptable levels and create an environment conducive for all student cultures to learn. Workshops were held and coordinated by faculty, administrators, and outside consultants to devise ways to bring diversity into the curriculum in a meaningful and lasting way.

There has no significant college-wide research done on this matter. However, faculty and staff continue to experiment with classroom activities and extracurricular and co-curricular events that foster the spirit of diversity without seeming contrived or phony (Kappner).

IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGE INSTRUCTION

Often, when teachers try to devise and implement multicultural activities, the activities become short highlights of a few individuals or places from a previously ignored micro-culture. Additionally, these activities are usually done at inappropriate times. The people and places of the culture can seem unrelated to the content and put in only to satisfy some higher authority's requirements. What should be going on is appropriate acknowledgment of all people and places that are significant to the content at hand. References to the Greeks and Egyptians during geometry lessons and the Arabs during algebra can easily be done, not to mention is appropriate. Even though, Calculus was neatly packaged in the Western World, the subject had its origins elsewhere. The whys behind the theorems, laws, and rules would add to the humanization of content. A connection with people is something that many students need. It is particularly

important for some students to find people that made significant contributions to fields that come from the background of those students. These connections give content meaning and meaning makes the educational experience worthwhile.

Technical courses, such as: mathematics and science, tend to become sterile and isolated from real-life. This is due, in part, to inadequate training about the people and societies behind the theorems and discoveries. Additionally, more practical applications that relate to the students in their daily lives and/or future careers are seriously needed. Educators should make a point to find out as much about the many cultures that caused a subject to reach its current form. This knowledge will allow faculty to show students how people, not too dissimilar from them, created and improved the tools and concepts in a discipline.

In a multicultural classroom, specific learning styles that are usually associated with identifiable groups within our classes should be addressed. These groups will most likely be gender-based, ethnic, linguistic, or racial. Helping non-traditional and disabled students would also be appropriate. Becoming sensitive to the background experiences of students, their goals, and cultural traditions that would affect academic performance will make the student feel comfortable in the classroom. If the student feels "at home" at Valencia, then the student will tend to stay and achieve his or her academic goals.

Often, professors can be found that teach courses to undergraduates with goal of creating content specialists, when the real goal is to get the student to learn as much as they can in one semester about a small part of content. Getting information to students in a way that they can process and

understand it is critical to the multicultural classroom. The instructor belongs to the dominant culture of academia. Initially, students belong to many non-academic cultures. Conflicts arise when the students are expected to convert over to the dominant culture without much help on how. Students want to learn. Faculty must provide opportunities for students to excel and achieve in a variety of ways that meet the students' needs and educational objectives within the structure of the community college. Harris (1995) states that educational institutions "must do a better job of preparing all students how to live and work in a diverse society," not just the minority groups.

CONCLUSION

I believe that multiculturalism is possible in all content areas and is applicable to all students. The curriculum must include acknowledgments of how different cultures contributed to the advancements in specific fields of study. Multiculturalism must also show respect for the subtleties, nuances, learning styles, and experiences of the lives and cultures of the students within the classroom. The curriculum at Valencia Community College must be dynamic, flexible, and open to modifications. The adaptability of the curriculum will allow for greater inclusion of differing perspectives and belief systems that can enhance critical thinking and the learning process of students. With a clear understanding of diversity issues, open-minds, and good teaching, multiculturalism can be part of the any classroom and college.

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